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PUBLIC HEARING

PUBLIC COMMENTS

3

MERCED WILD &amp; SCENIC RIVER

4

REVISED COMPREHENSIVE MANAGEMENT PLAN/SEIS

5

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

6

Tuesday, February 22, 2005

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r. I live

10 in Mariposa, and I work part time at the visitors center  
 11 chamber of commerce, so I get a lot of comments from  
 12 people. I'm just looking at the plan. Seems like the  
 13 Park Service likes alternative two, where they can  
 14 sometimes limit the visitors to Yosemite Valley. I have  
 15 some questions on that.

16 I think they ought to allow two plans, one for  
 17 people that can come on the first-turn basis, and then  
 18 part of the people that have to get a permit to come in  
 19 if they want to have day use in Yosemite Valley. I think  
 20 if we have -- our population is growing. We know that,  
 21 San Joaquin Valley, we're going to get more and more day  
 22 use visitors, so that was my one point.

23 My other thing is for the gateway communities.  
 24 If people want to come into Yosemite Valley for the day  
 25 use, and they have to get a permit, do they get it two

1 days in advance, or can someone who comes into Yosemite  
2 or Mariposa, spends the night, wants to come into  
3 Yosemite Valley and the rest of the park, how do they get  
4 the permit ahead of time for the outlying communities?  
5 So those are my questions on that. Will these day use  
6 permits be available to the gateway communities ahead of  
7 time, or does the visitor just apply for them like they  
8 apply for the wilderness permits, which seems to be a  
9 good plan.

10 I just think that we need communications with  
11 the gateway communities and also with the local people,  
12 because you know in the summer time we get our visitors  
13 in the summer, and they want to come to Yosemite Valley,  
14 and they certainly want to see Half Dome and that part of  
15 the park. So can they be sure if they bring visitors in  
16 that they can see this part of the park? Of course,  
17 they're aware of the rest of the park, and we certainly  
18 want visitors to see the rest of the park.

19 So I hope that gives you some viewpoints for day  
20 use visitors to Yosemite. Thank you.

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PUBLIC HEARING

PUBLIC COMMENTS

MERCED WILD & SCENIC RIVER

REVISED COMPREHENSIVE MANAGEMENT PLAN/SEIS

EL PORTAL SCHOOL

EL PORTAL, CALIFORNIA

Tuesday, February 22, 2005

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I have a lot of  
comments, but I think I'll stick to El Portal for now.

I question the wisdom of sacrificing El Portal  
and the Merced River Canyon for the sake of outdated  
planning in Yosemite National Park. Once I was  
supportive of moving as much as possible out of Yosemite  
Valley to El Portal, but after living and working here  
for 18 years, I realize this is not a realistic solution  
to some very real park problems; problems which include a  
crowded visitor experience during the busiest holidays,  
threatened natural and cultural resources, and  
vehicle-related air pollution.

Though El Portal was set aside in 1958 as an  
administration site for Yosemite National Park, the  
Merced Wild & Scenic River Act in 1987, and thanks to  
those who helped get it passed, now takes precedence over

1 what the park may with to El Portal section of the Merced  
2 River Corridor.

3 It needs to be emphasized to all El Portal  
4 residents that the Wild & Scenic River Act calls for  
5 protection and enhancement of the Merced River values.  
6 Those are also known as outstandingly remarkable values.  
7 The fact makes all the difference in the planning efforts  
8 for El Portal as well as for the entire Yosemite National  
9 Park; therefore, further development of El Portal is not  
10 as inevitable as the public and we as residents have been  
11 led to believe over the years. For example,  
12 out-of-valley parking, an increased administrative  
13 offices here would make and are making it necessary to  
14 disturb natural places that are just as rare,  
15 ecologically valuable, and scenic as any in Yosemite  
16 Valley, places that in most cases have never been  
17 impacted in this way before.

18 The 1996 SNEP report, which I just learned  
19 about, is called the Sierra Nevada Ecosystems Project,  
20 documented just how valuable and rare these ecosystems  
21 are in this section of the river canyon. I question the  
22 wisdom of destroying new areas in and out of the park  
23 with development that isn't absolutely necessary,  
24 development that is contributing to the commercialization  
25 and general upscaling of our national park.

1           While it seems totally appropriate for  
2 administrative offices to be relocated to urban areas  
3 distant from the park, it is puzzling to me why it has  
4 been determined that resource-related divisions such as  
5 NPS archeology and wildlife have been moved out of the  
6 valley and are being moved out of the valley to  
7 El Portal.

8           Unfortunately, most local residents do not  
9 realize that new DNC employee dorms are currently, right  
10 now -- California black oaks have been cut down to build  
11 these dorms in Curry Village, something I also question.  
12 Yet, El Portal residents are being asked to accept as  
13 part of this plan a huge influx of employees to be housed  
14 here in El Portal.

15           The Wild & Scenic Merced River Corridor does not  
16 need offices overlooking the river, more hotels and  
17 high-density apartments, additional commuters on Highway  
18 140, oversize buses belching diesel, more pavement, and  
19 even more bathrooms and showers. In order to truly  
20 protect and enhance the Merced River, scaling back on  
21 development in and out of the park should be the goal for  
22 both NPS and the park concession.

23           Though the population of Merced County,  
24 California, the nation, and the earth continues to grow,  
25 we all -- and this includes private landowners as well as

1 National Park Service employees, must remember that  
2 Yosemite and its resources, like the Merced River, are  
3 precious and finite.

4           One of my big questions for tonight, and I'll  
5 make this rhetorical right now, is how can we the public  
6 respond to a plan when the VERP report has not yet come  
7 out, so we don't even know what's threatened? We might  
8 have an idea, but we don't really know. Thank you.

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10 the Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center. I'd  
 11 just like to acknowledge the fact that many of the folks  
 12 here tonight are actually from El Portal and have  
 13 comments specifically for the El Portal region, and my  
 14 comments are addressed towards a review of the draft  
 15 management plan itself. I have a number of comments and  
 16 questions that I would like to raise this evening.

17 My first is based on the reading of the draft  
 18 management plan. It's a basic question, and that is, why  
 19 are the alternatives for the two objectives, that is user  
 20 capacity and the El Portal boundary, tied together? So  
 21 there seem to be four alternatives for both objectives,  
 22 and it seems to me that it would make more sense if the  
 23 alternatives for these objectives were dealt with  
 24 separately rather than together. I may be mistaken in  
 25 the understanding, but that's what I got reading from the

1 draft plan. Let me clarify that. I think we should be  
2 able to choose the alternatives for each objective  
3 separately rather than choosing an alternative that deals  
4 with both objectives at the same time.

5 My second question is that the draft plan  
6 proposes 11 VERP indicators, and I learned tonight  
7 that -- I didn't get this from reading but tonight that  
8 these indicators can be changed, and new indicators can  
9 be added. My question is, is the current 11 indicators,  
10 8 of which deal with biological and hydrological issues,  
11 my question is, do these deal with a range of  
12 environmental issues? That is, I would like to see  
13 indicators that cover a range of environmental issues  
14 from say microhabitat all the way up through ecosystem  
15 level and everything in between.

16 As I read in the management plan, it appears  
17 that you guys are interested in indicators that provide  
18 as much information and as wide a range of environmental,  
19 socioeconomic, and cultural issues as possible in each  
20 indicator, and I would say that it might be helpful to  
21 have some indicators to address more specific issues;  
22 that is, things which have a much higher risk, for  
23 instance, such as sensitive species or sensitive habitat  
24 rather than just having the general indicators. I  
25 realize now that these indicators can be added to and



1 modified over time, and I appreciate that.

2 I do have some ideas for other indicators, these  
3 include wildlife monitoring stations, CSEC is involved in  
4 measuring wildlife using automated camera systems which  
5 give us an idea about the presence or absence of  
6 sensitive wildlife species such as fishers and martins,  
7 and these might be helpful in determining whether  
8 wildlife is actually being impacted. I didn't read  
9 anything about that in the plan, but you may actually be  
10 working on that. Once again, direct monitoring of  
11 sensitive species, at-risk species, and habitats rather  
12 than these kind of broad-based indicators.

13 So my other question is, you mentioned types of  
14 systems that could be used to track visitors in the park,  
15 and you mentioned future realtime automated traffic data  
16 monitoring systems. I would like to know more about that  
17 specifically and any more future versions of the  
18 management plan. I'd like to know exactly what this  
19 means. I do have some ideas concerning this as well.  
20 Are they going to be computer-based systems for this  
21 managed traffic tracking, and I would also like to know  
22 if you are considering use of RFID chips for tracking  
23 traffic on a realtime basis, which is a new technology,  
24 not necessarily a prohibitively expensive technology for  
25 tracking traffic on a realtime basis.

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Thank you.

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~~RAM-D-35~~

I have a few things to say. One

is to ask the planning team to re-evaluate, and it sounds like they're already re-evaluating the designation of the El Portal segment as scenic or recreational, just to revisit that question. I learned from tonight from Mark that the forest came up with the original designation as recreational not scenic, because this segment was determined to be just like similar segments of the Yuba

1 or the American or the Tuolumne, et cetera, so it was  
2 left out. It was said, it's not unique enough, not  
3 regionally or nationally significant enough to be called  
4 a scenic stretch of river.

5           What concerns me about that is I looked at all  
6 the other outstanding remarkable values for El Portal  
7 area like biological, culture, et cetera, et cetera, and  
8 if you look at all those, they are found all over the  
9 place too, like there's bedrock mortars and pounding  
10 rocks in every canyon up and down the foothills, but  
11 cultural significance or archeological significance got  
12 put into the El Portal stretch, and biological  
13 significance, you see the slide of the live oaks in the  
14 side canyons. There's live oaks in side canyons up and  
15 down the foothills. So a whole bunch ORVs, that made it  
16 into El Portal's designation as being significant, scenic  
17 got left out because it was said to not be unique.

18           Anyway, I hope that makes sense, but I'd like  
19 that to be revisited, and I'd also like to advocate for  
20 the fourth alternative, which is the most restrictive to  
21 development in El Portal so that the development that  
22 seems inevitable is focused on the smallest possible area  
23 of already impacted sites and the maximum amount of  
24 wetlands, open space, biological resources, is left  
25 unimpacted.

36 -

--- and thank you. RMR-D-36 11/2

7 Good evening. My name is  
8 I'm with the Central Sierra Environmental  
9 Resource Center, and I will be providing some very  
10 detailed comments later. These are preliminary, because  
11 we hope that they perhaps push the park service to begin  
12 thinking about some of these. We've already some  
13 informal discussions that we hope will motivate some  
14 reexamination of exactly how this information has been  
15 presented so far and that in the final EIS studies  
16 there's more specificity.

17           The presentation that Jen put on is just another  
18   example of you guys being very well prepared, having  
19   excellent materials, and it's very visual, but it also  
20   lists some of the -- or as an example of some of the  
21   concerns that we have. One of them is very early on she  
22   was showing that indicators are supposedly things that  
23   you can measure that are quantitative to some degree, and  
24   yet when you go through your document, in many cases how  
25   accurately those indicators can really be measured is

1 very unclear, and I would suggest that many of them  
2 cannot easily be measured.

3 A second thing is that at one of the slides on  
4 the Power Point talked about developing VERP standards  
5 that set the threshold for the indicators. Thresholds to  
6 most of us seems to be a point where you absolutely stop,  
7 and actually Jen at one point said for alternative three,  
8 under no situation would we be able to go above the caps,  
9 and yet, I don't believe that's what's reflected in the  
10 document itself, and in many cases the threshold seems to  
11 be more or less just a judgment of park staff rather than  
12 something that the public can clearly see, there's this  
13 measurement and once that is clearly measured, then there  
14 will be an action that's immediate.

15 So one of the key concerns at our center and  
16 others that we've talked with put forward is there  
17 doesn't appear to be a clarity for the public to see a  
18 specificity that when a meadow has this many people in  
19 it, that's supposedly a threshold that instantly at that  
20 point when the threshold is reached, there's this action  
21 by the park service. We understand there's a long list  
22 of things that the park service can choose from, but the  
23 public will not know exactly what the consequence will be  
24 when that threshold is reached.

25 One of the other issues that we see is that in

1 alternative four the management of VERP quotas will be  
2 based on a range. Well, the reality is, if you have a  
3 range of five to ten, it's not likely that five is going  
4 to lead to an action, because when you have a range,  
5 you're not usually going to actually have something that  
6 is a drastic consequence of reaching the threshold until  
7 you actually reached the threshold.

8           It appears that even though there may be an  
9 intent by the park service to give yourself some  
10 proactive incentive to get going, just as soon as you  
11 move to the range, is not clear, based on the document,  
12 exactly how clear the consequences will be.

13           One of the things that Tom touched on very  
14 briefly when he talked is that we believe that it's  
15 important that the indicators and standards truly focus  
16 on what's most at risk. If you go through the biological  
17 and hydrological indicators now, which is really the  
18 quota for the ecosystem, it's questionable, except for  
19 water quality, whether the rest of these are really  
20 focusing on species or the attributes or the resources  
21 that may be of most concern.

22           So if you look at these, and we're talking about  
23 these thresholds that supposedly have been set, you'll  
24 see that water quality, what is the standard?  
25 Antidegradation. Very broad, general standard rather

1 than some very specific limits or length of social  
2 trails, no event increase, rather than something that  
3 clearly provides some very specific top quota that would  
4 help us understand not only what happens overall within a  
5 segment or zone, but what happens, sure there's been a  
6 decrease in social trails over here, but in the area over  
7 here there's been many more, and even though you may be  
8 over the net, there's still a lot of concerns.

9           The last thing is in terms of looking early on  
10 at the alternative, one thing that we see is the segment  
11 alternative seems to be more likely to be feasible with  
12 limited budget, with limited staff in the future than  
13 trying to go out into zones and define where those zones  
14 are and whether too many people are in those zones,  
15 whereas it does appear that the segment alternative has  
16 greater clarity. Thank you.

17                               -o0o-

1                   MERCED WILD and SCENIC RIVER  
2                   REVISED COMPREHENSIVE  
3                   MANAGEMENT PLAN/SUPPLEMENTAL  
4                   ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

5  
6                   (Whereupon the public testimony  
7                   portion of the meeting was  
8                   opened and the following  
9                   testimony was given:)

10

11               MS.               Good evening. My name is  
12               I'm with the American Alpine Club. I'm on  
13               the Board of Supervisors. I'm also chair of the AAC  
14               Yosemite Committee. I been involved in this meeting.  
15               We got involved in helping the park. What I would like  
16               to do is make one small comment about this park plan. I  
17               also want to mention that, of course, the AAC has a long  
18               history in Yosemite. In fact, our second president,  
19               another yosemite climber, one of the favorite climbs are  
20               both now immortalized on the latest cast of the north  
21               face of Half Dome and John Muir approaching the climb.

22               One thing we're concerned about is to make sure  
23               the Park Service realizes that although I'm commenting  
24               as a climber, as climbers we believe climbing is another  
25               very valuable recreational activity that's done in the



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RMR-D-38 146

MS.

Pacific Regional

1 I first want to thank the Park Service. This is no easy  
2 task, and it's certainly been one that they've been  
3 dealing with in many other plans and certainly will --  
4 certainly will enjoy, I'm sure, the next few weeks and  
5 months as they continue to refine the plan.

6 With that, I just want to mention my comments  
7 tonight are gonna reference a few issues. But National  
8 Parks Conservation Association will submit more lengthy  
9 and detailed comments in a written form in March.

10 This document is really a remarkable document for  
11 those of you who haven't spent too much time with it.  
12 Carrying capacity has been an economic issue until this  
13 point. It's an issue how we make sure that visitors  
14 have access to enjoy these amazing lands and public  
15 parks. But also to make sure that these resources are  
16 well protected so the very reason that people go to  
17 enjoy Yosemite is, in fact, in good repair so that when  
18 they come to see the place, they actually do experience  
19 a wonderful river that doesn't have eroded stream banks  
20 and certainly get to experience some level of solitude  
21 and quiet and have the ability to hear the river, which  
22 is a challenge.

23 This carrying capacity question is one not unique  
24 to Yosemite, but Yosemite is sort of blazing the path in  
25 terms of addressing the issue. Trying to figure out

1 ways to really protect the resources, also allowing  
2 visitor access. I commend them on that challenging but  
3 important job.

4 Couple comments specifically on the plan. I do  
5 want to suggest that the indicators, this is no surprise  
6 I'm sure to the Park Service, are very, very important.  
7 It's important that we get this list as close to  
8 accurate as possible. Certainly, the fact that it's an  
9 organic process is not lost on any of us. The fact that  
10 as we gain more knowledge and information about what  
11 resource impairments might happen or how visitors  
12 experience this place, we'll be able to add to that  
13 list. But I would like to encourage the Park Service  
14 and others to make sure we have extensively listed the  
15 important indicators.

16 One thing that's come up in the past is looking  
17 at air quality. Things in the air eventually hit the  
18 water. That's an important thing to look at as well as  
19 the special endangered species. It's important to look  
20 at those as indicators as well.

21 On management, I think as Jen mentioned, it's  
22 sort of the heart of this in many ways. Let's not  
23 forget to clearly articulate what the Park Service is  
24 going to do when those indicators have suggested to us  
25 that actions must be taken. I think we can do a better

1 job articulating how the park will remedy threats to  
2 certain biological resources and also how the parks will  
3 engage the gateway communities as visitors might have to  
4 be rerouted or redirected, what we can do with  
5 partnering with the communities so that they're able to  
6 talk to the visitors about what might be happening in  
7 the valley ahead of time.

8           Finally, the one issue that I wanted to cover  
9 tonight is that once this plan is in place and once we  
10 figured out the best way to move forward as people who  
11 love Yosemite and take care of Yosemite and visit  
12 Yosemite, it's important to recognize the Park Service,  
13 and right now in particular, is suffering from a  
14 significant fund shortfall. When it comes to  
15 operational dollars, resource management, we're looking  
16 at less than 50 percent of what the Park Service needs,  
17 what Yosemite needs to make sure they have the rangers  
18 out there monitoring to measure the health of these  
19 resources.

20           And I think it's important to recognize that once  
21 we have a plan in place, we're going to need to take  
22 steps to ensure that adequate financial resources are  
23 there for the Park Service to, in fact, implement this  
24 plan. It's not an easy feat given the fact that they're  
25 already under-funded, and this would add to their

1 important responsibilities. I would encourage the Park  
2 Service to look at ways they're going to address that  
3 shortfall and encourage the decision makers or citizens  
4 to talk to their decision makers to look for an increase  
5 so that the Park Service can do their job. Thank you.

6 (Whereupon the public testimony  
7 portion of the meeting concluded  
8 at 6:24 p.m.)  
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1 THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2005

2 2500 HOLLYWOOD WAY

3 BURBANK, CALIFORNIA 91505

4 7:00 P.M.

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6  
7 I am one the founding members of  
8 the Yosemite Valley Campers Coalition formed to, let's  
9 just say, be as close as we can to pushing our mission of  
10 the tent camping experience in Yosemite Valley. We  
11 believe that it is a true family values issue as well as  
12 an equal access issue. We are dedicated to the philosophy  
13 that tent camping in the national parks is the most  
14 compatible use in any of our national parks.

15 Specifically to the river plan, campers have the  
16 least impact on the river. Campers bring their single  
17 raft, their single inner tube whereas what we have now are  
18 vendors with massive rafts converging on shore banks,  
19 doing all kinds of damage that probably roll over into  
20 "the campers did that."

21 We don't need the support services, the fixed  
22 lodging houses. We'd probably take the very bare minimum.  
23 We don't need laundry facilities, we don't need staff  
24 housing, we don't need restaurant supplies, we don't need  
25 all kinds of business support systems that fixed lodging

1 needs.

2 If there were more campsites in the valley, which  
3 we believe there should be, we wouldn't have huge peaks in  
4 the visitation. Because if you have a campsite, you know  
5 where you're going, you know where to stay. It's very  
6 fixed and you don't need a big support structure. Things  
7 like ice and maybe some firewood are nice amenities, but  
8 we seem to have to make the trip anyways to the two or  
9 three outlets that we have.

10 But what concerns me as I listen to this draft is  
11 that the monitoring of the river is going push out the  
12 camper. How ever you cut it, it doesn't sound like good  
13 news for the camper. It sounds like great science in  
14 compliance with a court order, but we've already seen the  
15 devastation of the quantity of campsites and the  
16 confiscating of them in upper and lower river campsites  
17 because they're closed in Lower pines and North Pines.  
18 Campgrounds have been closed, they're diminishing, they're  
19 getting less and less and less. And we're doing a lot of  
20 effort by court order or by others in the last 25 years to  
21 try to make the park better. But the way to make the park  
22 better is making the camping experience better.

23 I know there's a lot of good intentioned people  
24 doing good duties, but the family camping and the access  
25 to the park is going to suffer. We've seen this over a

1 quarter of a century and it is going the way we always  
2 thought it was going. Nothing has happened in the last  
3 ten years that we didn't say was going to happen when the  
4 1980 plan came out.

5 I represent four generations of family, my  
6 grandparents, my parents and now I have grown children.  
7 Every one of us enjoys a few of the basic things; number  
8 one, we like to go to sleep -- we used to like to go to  
9 sleep watching the fire flies. We can't do that now, so  
10 we go to sleep watching the stars and trying to listen to  
11 the river. We like to wake up hearing the birds, seeing  
12 glacier point and hearing the river. We're farther and  
13 farther away. The river sites are very skimpy and it's  
14 harder to do that. And for that one week at a time where  
15 it used to be unlimited, now we have one week at a time.

16 The rules are multiplying. We've had a barrage  
17 of bear management, camp hosts shining flashlights in our  
18 eyes, you know, kicking the fires out. We've seem to keep  
19 adapting and surviving to a very perilous situation and I  
20 don't think the park service really knows. The park  
21 service doesn't emphasize our mission, we are very much at  
22 odds. And I see what's happening in this plan as an enemy  
23 of the campers because if the science proves out, the  
24 camper gets the wrap, we're going to have less campsites.  
25 And I disagree with having more walk-in campsites which



1 would be restoration of the campsites destroyed by the  
2 river, by the flood.

3 And there was engineering science in making that  
4 happen just as much there is engineering science as  
5 preserving the river. The two don't have to fight each  
6 other. You can use good engineering and you can also keep  
7 the camping experience at the pre-flood level. I guess I  
8 should use that word more, pre-flood levels. What we  
9 really want is the 1980 levels, but we're never going to  
10 get there.

11 So I'm here to make sure that you know there is a  
12 voice of millions of people out there that enjoy this  
13 activity and that it is endangered and it is going to keep  
14 being endangered unless you do something drastic. Red  
15 light.

16 (The proceedings concluded at 7:07 p.m.)

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1 PUBLIC TESTIMONY HELD IN OAKHURST, CALIFORNIA

2 : I volunteered to be first. I  
3 heard that you're more patient with the person who goes  
4 first. This planning effort is a huge disappointment.  
5 The court ruled that the entire 2000 River Plan was  
6 invalid. Citing two different issues, one being user  
7 capacity. To assume that all you had to do was plug in  
8 some numbers and you're done makes a mockery of the  
9 judicial system. User capacity is a foundational  
10 element that cannot be considered in isolation. You  
11 frequently cite John Muir's quote, "When we try to pick  
12 out something by itself we find it hitched to everything  
13 else." That is except when it involves user capacity.

14 Just like with the first plan, it seems your goal is  
15 to get through this nightmare as fast as possible so you  
16 can get on with the Valley Plan and spend the El Portal  
17 flood money. To make it all the easier, it seems you've  
18 learned from Bruce Babbitt that if terminology doesn't  
19 work, just redefine it. He didn't like the  
20 accountability that came with the term "unimpaired" as  
21 in the Organic Act, so he came up with a new director's  
22 order and redefined it. That new definition is now  
23 institutionalized in your Management Policies so it's  
24 easier to justify irreparable damage if you're called  
25 before a judge.

1       You've done the same thing with user capacity. The  
2       82 guidelines define the concept as the quantity of  
3       recreational use which an area can constrain without  
4       adverse impact on the ORVs and free flowing character of  
5       the river, without adverse impact on the quality of the  
6       recreation experience, and without adverse impact on  
7       public health and safety. Instead, you've chosen to go  
8       with VERP spin, which claims user capacity is only about  
9       sustaining the desired resource and social conditions  
10      that complement the purpose of the park unit and their  
11      management objectives." Complement the purpose of the  
12      park units and their management objectives," mushy words  
13      that pander to the political agenda of the day, like  
14      recruiting a national tourism czar or standing by while  
15      the Yosemite Fund defines the falls.

16      Rather than worrying about preserving those pesky  
17      Merced River ORVs, you claim undying allegiance to the  
18      1980 GMP and its visitor capacity goals, but even that  
19      is disingenuous. The GMP retained 684 drive-in camp  
20      sites in the Valley. You're going to end up with 330.  
21      Lodging is even more interesting, the flood actually  
22      resulted in a 1260 GMP number for lodging, but  
23      apparently that configuration didn't produce enough  
24      cash.

25               So ten cabins will be slashed from 567 units to

1 274, while another 60 cabins without baths are slated  
2 for upgrades. Overall you want to tear out a total of  
3 647 tent cabins and drive-in camp sites, but when it  
4 comes to income producing hard-sided lodging the numbers  
5 stay the same. But 35 percent of those units will be  
6 upgraded and made more expensive. You claim your target  
7 for overnight capacity is 7711, as stated in the GMP,  
8 but using your figures and in appendices the Valley Plan  
9 results in an overnight capacity of 5607. But most  
10 disturbing is that this reduction is a direct result of  
11 a 52 percent decrease in the lowest cost overnight  
12 opportunities. The types of facilities most affordable  
13 to young families and those on limited incomes. The  
14 types of facilities that provide a low-impact experience  
15 directly connected to Yosemite's natural values.

16 By the way, the GMP number cited before already  
17 reflect removal of facilities along the Merced River.  
18 Let's be honest, the only goal that appears to matter  
19 from the GMP is getting private vehicles out of the  
20 Valley and converting access to an urban-style mass  
21 transit system. That's why user capacity had to be  
22 redefined, there was no way the old definition about  
23 adverse impacts to ORVs, visitor experience, and public  
24 safety would stand up under the crush of an abominable  
25 bussing scheme. But now you only have to worry about

1 sustaining the desired conditions that complement the  
2 purpose of the park's units and their management  
3 objectives.

4 In closing, this document is nothing more than a  
5 vague five-year statement of work mascerading as a plan.  
6 It claims follow-on plans will be reviewed and revised  
7 if necessary, but that will be tough when trees have  
8 already been logged, facilities have already been  
9 constructed, roads have already been realigned, traffic  
10 circulation has been reconfigured, and visitation  
11 patterns have been altered. After all, you figure  
12 you've fulfilled your requirement, as soon as the ORV is  
13 signed. Thank you.

... 41 1 of 4

14 I am just  
15 representing myself as a citizen tonight. You know I  
16 would really like to thank the whole staff, they came up  
17 from Los Angeles, you guys have put in a tremendous day,  
18 so thank you for being here.

19 I too am a little skeptical of the plan. I must  
20 admit I found the document lengthy and very difficult to  
21 understand. And one quick example, a fact sheet issued  
22 in February 2005, providing an overview of the MRP poses  
23 a hypothetical question. "Will the park close the gates  
24 if limits are reached?" In response to the question by  
25 saying, "Turning people away at entrance gates, or

1 otherwise closing park entrances, is not being proposed  
2 in the Preferred Alternative." Yet on table 29, page  
3 252 of the Preferred Alternative, under rationing and  
4 allocation, one tool listed is: "Limit overall numbers  
5 of users through entrance station quotas."

6 This is an important issue to me because it gets to  
7 the basic reason for the supplementary draft DIS being  
8 presented here tonight and that is the result of the  
9 Ninth Circuit Court order that the park implement a user  
10 capacity program that presents specific measureable  
11 limits on use. Actually, the National Park Service  
12 addressed this issue 25 years ago in the 1980 General  
13 Management Plan which included a figure of 18,241  
14 visitors at any given time on a daily basis.

15 For Yosemite Valley, based on the facility capacity  
16 at that time, as best as I can determine, and it has  
17 been difficult, and I don't want that to sound negative,  
18 I know the staff has worked hard on this, but what the  
19 park is now proposing in its Preferred Alternative,  
20 Alternative No. 2, is an additional 5 years of study  
21 under a process identified as Visitor Experience and  
22 Resource Management, VERP, before the day use are  
23 established, except there are some interim limits. It  
24 is difficult to pin down just what these interim limits  
25 are, but they appear to be a great deal more than the

1 Yosemite Valley planning calls for, roughly roughly 30  
2 percent more.

3 Again, that's my reading of the document. It  
4 again needs to be pointed out that a facility capacity  
5 was established back in 1980. And 20 years later, a  
6 lawsuit forced the production of the Merced River Plan.  
7 At this point, that was the year 2000, the park was in  
8 arrears 10 years in statutory compliance with the Wild  
9 Scenic River Act of 1987 that established the Merced  
10 River as a wild and scenic river. These statutory  
11 requirements included designated visitor use limits.

12 I do feel that in another five years of delay based  
13 on a promise that the VERP process will eventually come  
14 to some definition of visitor limits along the river is  
15 unreasonable. When asking the question of park  
16 planners, "Are you considering a day-use visitor system  
17 for the river corridor in Yosemite Valley?" And again I  
18 don't want this to be negative, my experiences with the  
19 park planners has been very positive, but the response I  
20 sometimes get is this is such a politically hot topic,  
21 it was one of the very last things that we would  
22 consider.

23 I am not an expert on the National Environmental  
24 Policy Act, or the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, but in  
25 both documents I do not find any reference to not

1 The Utility Improvement Plan described by the  
2 Mariposa Indian Council has the most destructive project  
3 in Yosemite since the flood. But this is only the  
4 beginning. Watch out for the widening of Southside  
5 Drive into a two-way traffic nightmare, especially in  
6 winter. And of course, there is Segment D which may  
7 even alter the Merced River channel.

8 The Park Service hopes to scare the public into  
9 supporting Preferred Alternative 2 by inserting these  
10 visitation caps into the other alternatives. Visitation  
11 caps lacking any scientific support are manipulative and  
12 stupid; the public is not. Ironically, the strategy is  
13 convoluted, as the plan is for unlimited bus visitation.  
14 It is greed, ego and control that drives the elimination  
15 of all-day visitor private vehicle access, not  
16 environmental stewardship. Democrats and Republicans  
17 are equally guilty. The River Plan and the Valley Plan  
18 are Clinton/Babbitt plans being implemented by  
19 Bush/Norton. Active support comes from  
20 pseudo-environmental groups like the NRDC, the NPCA, the  
21 Wilderness Society, the Yosemite Fund, and the Alpine  
22 Club. Passive support for the destruction continues  
23 because of the silence from the Yosemite Association,  
24 the Yosemite Institute and fearful park personnel.

25 The voice to protect Yosemite is growing in



1 sessions as well as no published announcement of these  
2 "dog and pony shows" until one day before, if that. My  
3 testimony will highlight your failed stewardship of the  
4 Merced River corridor in Yosemite. You have contrived  
5 the River Plan to be the foundation for the destructive  
6 commercialization rampant in the Yosemite Valley.

7           Knowing you have total control of the process,  
8 and a legal authority to sign any ROD you want, one may  
9 justifiably ask why invest time, energy, and financial  
10 resources to oppose the Park Service destructive  
11 commercialization in Yosemite. The answer is simple:  
12 Yosemite is worth it. It is going on eight years since  
13 the Park Service started using the '97 flood as a means  
14 to commercialize Yosemite into an elitist park. The  
15 Hodapp Report, supported by then Superintendent  
16 Griffin's testimony, clearly stated that 120 million  
17 dollars of flood recovery money was not for flood  
18 recovery projects. Money made available with good  
19 intentions but used to finance permanent destruction.  
20 The aggressive widening and realignment of El Portal  
21 Road, a project that revealed there wasn't even a Merced  
22 River Plan in existence to the Lower Falls,  
23 Disneyfication with the abominable bus stop, and the  
24 fortress for a potty, constructed within the Merced  
25 River corridor.

1 developing an alternative based on someone's concern  
2 that the alternative may be a politically hot issue.  
3 NEPA requires only that our managers use good science  
4 and a lot of public input so that an informed decision  
5 can be made, and at that point political considerations  
6 are always a factor. But they should not be in the  
7 preparation of the alternatives in the draft document  
8 which should be developed so the public can understand  
9 and comment intelligently on the action proposed.

10 I would urge the National Park Service in conclusion,  
11 with great respect, to go back to the contractor of this  
12 draft DIS and require that the document be redone in  
13 plain language with a range of alternatives that include  
14 an implementation of the day user reservation system.

15 Thank you very much

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16 Oakhurst. First, this  
17 is not a revised Merced River Plan, it is a new River  
18 Plan. Or at least it's supposed to be. The Court ruled  
19 the 2000 River Plan is invalid. The same River Plan  
20 that is now used to justify the predetermined Valley  
21 Plan. Others are putting on public record, as you have  
22 already heard, the real issues with respect to  
23 protecting the Merced River corridor and Yosemite.  
24 Despite the National Park Service's efforts to limit  
25 public input, through the limited number of scoping

1 volume, numbers, and influence as evidenced by the  
2 proposed five year interim program, and the eight years  
3 it has taken the Park Service to get this far. Yosemite  
4 now has its fourth superintendent struggling to continue  
5 the commercial destruction while misrepresenting as  
6 restoration.

7           If and when the Park Service is sincere in  
8 upholding its position to protect Yosemite unimpaired,  
9 it will abandon strategies to buy off support to phony  
10 gateway partnerships and manipulative, disingenuous  
11 Delphi Technique seminars. Instead, all true  
12 stakeholders, Native Americans, campers, gateways, et  
13 cetera, will be an integral part of research, planning,  
14 implementation, and on-going evaluation.

15           We leave you with the published articles that  
16 clearly demonstrate the elitist, Disney-style  
17 commercialization in the Merced River corridor,  
18 Yosemite, and the Park Service itself. The Park Service  
19 looking for a tourism czar. "In quest to "Disney-fy."  
20 The Park system -- service is sacrificing the very  
21 quality that makes national parks worth while visiting.  
22 From Capitol Hill to the Potomac, roads have been  
23 closed, parking lots eliminated, gathering spaces roped  
24 off, and monuments blocked by poured concrete, often  
25 without public announcement."

1 The way it's going now they'll turn them all into  
2 a theme park having people park in remote lots, then get  
3 shuttled around from place to place, they want to get  
4 the people off the mall, we want just the opposite.  
5 Welcome to Yosemite, \$20 for entry fee, \$1,400 a Brace  
6 bridge dinner, Visa/Master charge welcomed, view from  
7 the bus window worthless.

8 Brian, by the way, sent a message from last night, he  
9 encouraged you to both tube down the Merced River and  
10 also to spend a day on a wheel chair going through the  
11 park. Thank you.

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12 : Hi, my name is  
13 'm the third so I go by if nobody  
14 recognizes me as I'm here mainly to speak for  
15 what I consider the common man. I've been a volunteer  
16 in the Park as Nordic Ski Patrol, I've seen you out  
17 there skiing. Also, my wife and I were former  
18 Wilderness Rangers, so I respect the Wilderness aspects  
19 of the Park. In yet I'm concerned as a kayaker, just a  
20 floater down the river, that over the years our access  
21 is becoming more and more limited. And I actually think  
22 many people see the Park on an intertube on a kayak,  
23 something floating quietly down the river is a pretty  
24 minimal impact.

25 I understand there is erosion and stuff taking

1 place in certain areas. I would just like to see the  
2 Park use a common sense approach that allows visitors to  
3 use the river. It's a quiet way to see the park, and at  
4 least no my opinion as a former Wilderness Ranger that  
5 did optimum use quotas and impacts, I think that could  
6 be managed well.

7 The other thing I am concerned about too is at  
8 least how I read the plans. Is the reduction of common  
9 man facilities, camp grounds, and at least how I see  
10 facilities being proposed that many of us can't afford.  
11 So I'd just like the Park to keep as many camp grounds  
12 as possible, and facilities. And you know, obviously,  
13 you may not want to build them where a flood has removed  
14 them and could remove them once again, but at least have  
15 those facilities in the Park. That's all I have to say.  
16 Also I'd like to compliment at least on the  
17 professionalism I've seen with the staff and thanks for  
18 getting me oriented. I'm certainly not as well informed  
19 as many people that have spoken here tonight.

20

21 (End of Public Testimony)

22

23

24

25

I	1	5	4	7				MER
RT	#S	LT	DT	UT	IA	IR	OR	TS

2 REVISED COMPREHENSIVE

3 MANAGEMENT PLAN/SUPPLEMENTAL  
4 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

6 (Whereupon the public testimony  
7 portion of the meeting was  
8 opened and the following  
9 testimony was given:)

11 MS. UER: My name is V

12 and under user capacity, I support alternative two  
13 because it affords management more flexibility and  
14 reacts to conditions that are on the ground at the time  
15 the decisions are being made rather than at some  
16 previous planning period or some future anticipated  
17 period. It reacts to what's happening right then and  
18 there, and it gives management a lot of leeway to do the  
19 right thing. That's all.

20 : My name is

21 I represent four generations of campers starting in 1928  
22 when my grandfather started camping in Yosemite. If I'm  
23 not mistaken, it was unlimited time of camp, pulled up  
24 wherever you wanted and camped. I started going in  
25 1954. If I'm not mistaken, it was a two-week limit at

1 that time. And the way you got your camp site was you  
2 roped off what you wanted. And as a result, we've  
3 become lifetime friends with people that we camped next  
4 to.

5 Our user experience was very well rounded. When  
6 I say "our", again, all four generations from my  
7 grandfather being able to get bear steak at the market  
8 to us now still enjoying floating down the river --  
9 well, kind of enjoying. Still limitations that people  
10 are telling us to get out, they think we're gonna affect  
11 the river bottom. Really it's -- really is centered  
12 around the Merced River. And if I'm not mistaken, the  
13 actual length of river use and percentage portion to the  
14 whole valley floor is fractional compared to the length  
15 of the river. The impacts that we've seen over the  
16 years as far as result of our use, my family, my 30 to  
17 40 cousins and uncles and aunts and brothers and now  
18 children, has been minuscule compared to the impact of  
19 what the National Park Service, or the Yosemite park  
20 people, have deemed what the park needs to have done for  
21 our better experience.

22 Okay. I think that it's unfair to group the  
23 campers with the day use people. The campers could  
24 be -- could be the biggest advocate to the Yosemite park  
25 environment, Yosemite park officials, and helping them

1 to preserve the camping experience. It's very  
2 frustrating at times to experience things like I did one  
3 year when I was trying to put a rope up over the river  
4 so my kids could swing. The ranger said, "What are you  
5 doing?" I said, "I'm putting the rope on the tree so my  
6 kids can swing." He said, "No, you're not, because  
7 you're damaging the tree." I said, "How is that?" And  
8 I said, "I been doing this for the last" -- I think it  
9 was 42 years at that point. And he says, "Doesn't  
10 matter how long you been doing it. If I hold a gun to  
11 your head, will that change your mind?" And I was  
12 appalled. I think at the time Jerry Mitchell was the  
13 superintendent or might have -- is it Bob Andrew?

14 MR. MARK BUTLER: Chief ranger.

15 That employee was fired after  
16 that. And another experience when we used to have the  
17 river rock camp sites -- camp fires, we used to -- it  
18 was my job as a kid to build the fire in the morning.  
19 There was a flat bed of trucks coming by -- of  
20 volunteers coming by with shovels in hand. They were  
21 saying they were gonna rearrange our camp fire pits.  
22 What they were doing was throwing the rocks in the river  
23 so we couldn't burden our fires. Okay.

24 I said, "If you touch mine, you got my cousin's  
25 and grandpa's, you might as well get the ranger." And



1 they left us alone. It was the -- it's the momentum,  
 2 what we call harassment of our camping experience, from  
 3 getting rid of fire falls because somebody decided it  
 4 was bad for the environment -- we're north pine  
 5 campers -- to taking out river sites after they paved  
 6 them all and put down concrete bumpers. They decided to  
 7 take out half of them. Closing the group camping. I  
 8 don't know why. Taking advantage of the flood, which at  
 9 that point it was 40 some odd years I had been going.  
 10 With all the dams we built, all the water fights we had  
 11 picking dirt, the biggest impact was the flood. If I'm  
 12 not mistaken, this new plan and relocating camp sites is  
 13 gonna push people closer to the granite walls where the  
 14 biggest danger is rock slides. We were there at Happy  
 15 Isles, and it was devastating. You're gonna get us  
 16 closer to a rock slide experience than a river  
 17 experience. And just doesn't make sense. The whole  
 18 advent of limiting camp fires. I don't understand it.  
 19 It's very frustrating. The other is the reservation  
 20 systems -- I'm trying to hurry up. It's not working.  
 21 It's limiting campers and increasing day use people.  
 22 Five, four, three, two one. I think I'm done. There's  
 23 a lot more to stay. I will stop now.  
 24  
 25